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# MMT NEWS

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## NOW WE ARE TEN

... or thereabouts. As Chairman Thomas Cocke observed in *Newsletter N° 16*, the Mausolea & Monuments Trust emerged in response to a need, without any specific inaugural meeting or event to mark its foundation. But there certainly has been a good ten years' worth of solid work behind the initiative, so the occasion of the Annual General Meeting of 23 May 2007, at the Art Workers' Guild in Queen Square, London, also celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Trust, with an address by our Patron, Sir Howard Colvin, and a lecture by the effervescent architectural historian Lucinda Lambton.

## Information wanted

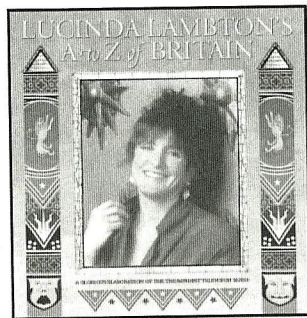
Lucinda Lambton's text makes up the bulk of this anniversary issue, not least as members may wish to savour and pursue her tantalizing descriptions of monuments of note around the country. Not all these yet feature in the Trust's online gazetteer, but new entries are always welcome – most welcome, indeed, when informants can provide location, description, architect, date, history and condition, informed by observation as well as desk research.

Moreover, the Trust's archive would benefit greatly from a stock of digital images, of monuments already featured in the gazetteer and others of note that members may have occasion to photograph. Please send your images, in any digital format (e.g. .jpg, .tif, .pdf), to the editor at [MMT@signefied.me.uk](mailto:MMT@signefied.me.uk) – and please incorporate the name of the monument into each file name (e.g. Ducrow1.jpg) to facilitate identification!

## Annual Report & Membership Leaflet

Thanks not least to inexpensive digital printing, two items are enclosed with this issue – the Trust's Annual Report 2007, and a new membership leaflet, both of which are being used for promotional activities, and to support applications and reports. We sincerely hope that members will pass on the leaflet to potential new members – additional copies are available through the Trust's office (*contact details, back page*).

## LUCINDA LAMBTON



Lucinda Lambton is a writer, photographer and broadcaster whose extensive work for television includes three series of *Lucinda Lambton's Alphabet of Britain* for the BBC. Her handsomely illustrated books include *Lucinda Lambton's A-Z of Britain*, *Temples of Convenience & Chambers of Delight*, *Old New World*, *Vanishing Victoriana*, *An Album of Curious Houses*, *Magnificent Menagerie*, *Palaces for Pigs and Other Beastly Dwellings*, and *Beastly Buildings: The National Trust Book of Architecture for Animals*.

What a great and glorious honour to be asked to speak to the Mausolea and Monuments Trust. I first heard about this excellent body from Tim Knox when we were in Pinner together, caressing the curious 19<sup>th</sup> century pyramidal monument – stuck through on high, with a stone sarcophagus protruding from either side – designed by John Claudius Loudon, founding father of London's parks, and author of 32 hefty works on architecture, agriculture and horticulture.

There we were, at the top of the forever flummoxing Pinner High Street – where, in the midst of post-war London development, you suddenly come upon this picturesque hill, undoubtedly a village or small country town, flanked on either side by timber-framed and brick buildings dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the church of St. John the Baptist standing guardian overall. In the graveyard you come upon the singular structure designed to house the remains of Loudon's parents, William and Agnes Loudon. How did such an oddity ever come into being?

The only explanation offered is that Loudon had commissioned it in his wildly indecipherable hand, proof of which was given in this very funny story: collecting material for his *Encyclopædia of Trees and Shrubs*, Loudon wrote to the Duke of Wellington asking to see his famous Waterloo beeches. The Duke, reading his signature as 'London' and 'beeches' as 'breeches', was startled that the Bishop of London wanted to see his trousers! He sent them off nevertheless, startling the Bishop in turn with their unexpected arrival!

Yet it is thanks to Loudon that we are soothed by suburbia, for he created the prototype of umpteen suburban villas as well as, amongst his many triumphs, suggesting plane trees for London and that 'Breathing Zones' of green should be left around the Metropolis. Not only that, he was the first to design the landscaping of cemeteries such as Kensal Green, a tract of planting at its most picturesque, that shows off to perfection an architectural utopia in miniature, with mausolea and monuments presenting a showpiece of the architect's, sculptor's, stonemason's and letterer's art.

Kensal Green is a paradise that I am lucky enough to be reminded of daily, coming in and out of London on the elevated A40, from where amidst the horror all about you, it suddenly cuts through the chimneys – green by day, jet black by night – with feasts of food for thought whilst pondering on the people who lie within its walls.

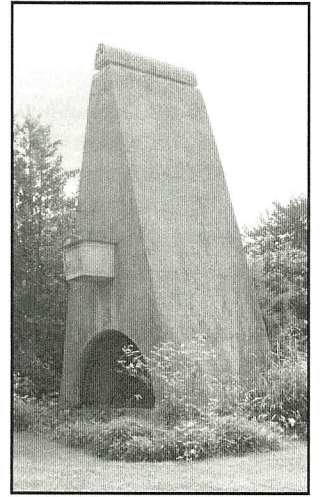
I have never been in any doubt that there is a perpetual party there, a glorious and glittering assembly of 19<sup>th</sup> century luminaries – for, if there is life after death, you could find no more vibrant a collection of characters than those gathered together at Kensal Green, so many with mausolea and monuments of considerable distinction. However, it must be said that the outlandish Graeco-Egyptian concoction of a mausoleum to Andrew Ducrow could hardly be described thus!

Designed in 1837 by George Danson in brick, plaster and artificial stone with a *wealth* of flamboyant decoration – winged horses, scarabs and beehives, and sphinxes guarding the door – here is vibrant proof of the mausoleum mirroring an aspect of the age in which it was built.

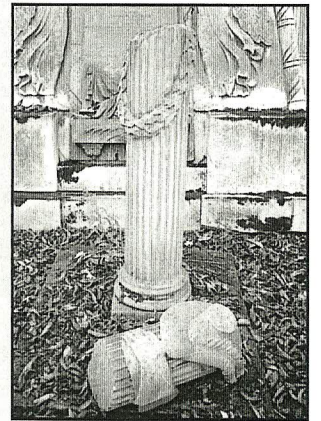
Ducrow was as extravagant as his mausoleum. ‘The Colossus of Equestrians’, proprietor of and showman in Astley’s Amphitheatre, he was famed for his peculiarly picturesque *Poses Plastique Equestres*, in which he struck attitudes as Zephyr, Mercury or a Yorkshire Fox Hunter whilst riding or driving as many as *nine horses at once!* The displays were “but the air on which he flew”, wrote one enraptured critic. There were elegant variations, with Ducrow in skintight ‘marbleised attire’, motionless atop a plinth. He would gradually change from one antique statue to another: ‘Raphael’s Dream’ was particularly popular!

From the Harrow Road, clapped in a trap of seemingly unyielding urbanism, you are shocked quite out of your senses when, having walked through this cemetery entrance gates, you suddenly find yourself surrounded by such monumental splendour!

Throughout the cities of the world – and so often amidst grimmest surroundings – there are such enclaves of 19<sup>th</sup> century Elysian fields; places of breathtaking beauty and interest that are so often bewilderingly neglected today. Time and again I am bashed in the head with befuddlement, when driving through some densely built up area, and suddenly spotting, through a gateway, grand and beautiful countryside, filled with sculptural interest and with locals walking by,



Loudon’s monument to his parents in the churchyard of St. John the Baptist, Pinner  
(photo: P.J. Barlett)



“Ducrow’s hat and gloves, that he wore as Charles II, are laid on a broken column, all in stone. Too fancy by far for some: ‘Here is Ponderous coxcomber,’ growled *The Builder* in 1836.”  
(photo: Signe Hoffos)

harassed by urban life, seemingly unaware that the Garden of Eden is mere feet away.

How well I remember, for example, beating a path to the Key Hill Cemetery in Birmingham to find the monuments to the writer Harriet Martineau and Alfred Bird (he who invented the custard). Amid traffic ridden roads and garish garages suddenly there again was ravine of perfect peace: a great canyon of a cemetery filled with local monumental lore. From within, over a small wall, I could see mothers dragging children through the asphalt jungle, when with one step they could have so easily have stepped from earthy hell into this earthly paradise. Not one, though, even glance in that direction!

So, too, with Arnos Vale in Bristol, where, surrounded by particularly vile development, two Doric temple lodges – supremely strong in their severity – proclaim the great civic pride behind this cemetery, leading you into an architect's dream! Here the skyline is pierced through with a multitude of styles. Not only is your aesthetic sense satisfied by 19<sup>th</sup> century memorials, but also your sense of curiosity, adventure and discovery.

(What rich endlessly linking historical pickings can be gleaned: how once I delighted to find a great monument to the man who brought the first gorilla to England, in one Liverpool cemetery – and the monument to he who bought the first banana to Britain in another nearby!)

But back to Arnos Vale, where there is singularly splendid Hindu temple which, to my delight, I discovered to have been built by a James Prinsep, who studied under Pugin and then spent an alarmingly fruitful life in India, working in the Calcutta mint, for which he devised scales that could weigh a three-thousandth part of a grain! He redesigned the Benares Mint and became the authority on Indian currency. A prolific archi-

tect, he also devised the Ganges drainage plan of Benares. He devoted his later years to Indian antiquities, deciphering inscriptions on temples which had even baffled the author of the first Sanskrit-English dictionary. This Hindu temple in Bristol is therefore a work of serious scholarship, not to be confused with the fancy dress Eastern garb that was to clothe such British buildings as Brighton Pavilion.

It was designed to honour the remains of Raja Rommahun Roy, known as the father of modern India, and said to be the first Indian to be buried in Britain (in 1833). It is a beautiful little building, an achievement sadly all too rare today.

For I fear there is a quite lamentable quantity of ill-designed modern monuments, sadly illustrating the descent of our funerary art. Gaze about you at memorial monuments of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and your every artistic sensibility is satisfied; seek out those of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and every one is smashed. As with architecture, so too with this miniature branch of structural design: the blighting blank modernist block of the '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s reigned supreme. But here the similarity ends: whereas great improvements have swept through the architectural world in the last ten years, they have been woefully missed by the monumental mason.

Today's cemeteries and graveyards are like the most brutalist of developments, with one hideous difference – that they are still being built, hand over fist, with the same blinkered fervour of the post-war years. Great tracts of consecrated land continue to fall victim to what can only be described as a grotesque modernistic world in miniature. Rules and regulations as to size, height and material have resulted in grim uniformity. Democracy in life has become dictatorship in death, with

every one of us still forced to suffer regimentation of marble and stone blocks, riding roughshod over our remains.

Even the most aesthetically aware now have to end their days under a banal block on the landscape. The graveyards of the past were intended as morally uplifting oases, reflecting the tastes, the dreams and the ideals of the age. What in Heaven's name do today's clumpingly sterile black marble blocks, relieved only by grisly green marble chippings, reflect of our ideals today? 'God's Acre' has been reduced to a sterile strip, swept clean of all spirit.

But the tide is starting to turn. Harriet Frazer, with *Memorials by Artists*, has established a service to put the bereaved in touch with the craftsmen best suited to their needs. Thanks to her, there are now over a 2346 exquisite modern memorials worldwide.

For me, Harriet has always seemed like a Statue of Liberty who, with beacon aloft, has been shining the light of freedom into the churchyard for the last twenty years, with great memorials that have been created in stone, slate, cast iron and wood, all wrought into a multitude of most marvellous forms – invariably with words that move you to tears.

To see all these extraordinary works is to rejoice that, at long last, a very grave wrong is being put to rights. For with their beauty, dignity and artistic dash, they have triumphantly trounced the bureaucracy that has laid cultural and artistic waste to so many of our churchyards and cemeteries.

Nor, of course, is it just Britain's funerary art that has so wretchedly progressed with the modern age. In Italy, a great tradition produced stupendously realistic marble monuments with the new money of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Genoa, for example, a man on his deathbed, clad in a lace nightgown, draped with lace-edged embroidered sheets,

on a bed cover with a recognisable satin 'sheen', surrounded by his wife, five sisters and a brother – all life size, and all dressed in their most elaborate marble best. Pleats, lace trimmings and a multitude of tiny buttons are all exquisitely defined. Or what about the life-size figures of a son bidding farewell as he lifts the elaborately carved 'tapestry of life' for his father to pass under? Most extraordinary of all are the gargantuan head and shoulders of a pink granite woman, rearing high over two life-size bronze 'workers' ploughing with oxen!

Such figurative memorials have only falteringly continued in the last century, but the mausoleum has magnificently marched into the modern age, with mostly hideous but sensational mausolea by the thousand. For example, in Il Cimitero Monumentale di Torino, you find yourself strolling down streets of fiercely modernistic little buildings – in concrete, steel, stone and glass – each the size of a one-bedroom house. Their forms streak off in every direction: great Epstein-like men and women shoot forth from box-like blocks and pyramids, modern mosaics are 'splashed' onto one shining black cube, another of violently coloured blue and green glass has cascades of mirrors. There are extended pyramids and 'masts', all making up a most surreal modernistic 'townscape' in miniature. Although each and every one is hideous, as with the 19<sup>th</sup> century cemeteries, the effect is like a great pattern book of contemporary architectural design, a template for a town employing every modern material.

Only last month I found my cup of happiness – and sadness – overflowing in the cemetery in Budapest, filled with heroes of all the uprisings and with Art Nouveau monuments and mausolea of quite staggering beauty. Most surprising of all was a billowing

white stone sheet draped over two life-size men and two horses, leaping forth from four corners hauling the sheet on their heads. All brightest white, it dates from 1994. Startling in the extreme, it was designed Miklos Melocco for Jozsef Antall, Hungary's first post-Communist prime minister. As for the great hero Kossuth, he lies within a classical mausoleum the size of a Cambridge college.

In the UK, the ancient art of building a mausoleum, as you all know, became popular during the 1700s. This 18<sup>th</sup> century revival was of course all part of the new understanding of antiquity, which caused a craving for classical architecture. The mortuary monument, on its relatively modest and manageable scale, provided a heaven-sent opportunity to emulate the buildings of Rome, Greece and Egypt, while placing them piously and picturesquely in the landscape. So enthusiastically was this opportunity seized that Britain led most of Europe in building these neo-classical mausolea.

Before this revival, affluent families had almost invariably built private chapels attached to churches. At St. Lawrence, Little Stanmore, there is a ravishingly beautiful example, created on the very cusp of the change – a classical chamber for the dead still comfortingly clinging to the body of the church. It was built by James Gibbs, the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Chandos, in 1735 in honour of his second wife, Cassandra. Amid the subtle paintwork of *trompe-l'oeil* trickery and grisaille – all by Gaetano Brunetti – the Duke stands bewigged yet in full Roman rig, attended by his devout spouses – his first wife, Mary, as well as Cassandra.

The Duke's vainglorious monument was carved 27 years before he died. "My Lord advances with majestic mien, smit with the mighty pleasure to be seen," wrote Alexander Pope in one of many satires written of the

man. As Paymaster General to George I, Chandos had amassed a prodigious fortune, and he speculated on a grand scale, providing Poe with yet more fodder.

*Yet since heaven the Duke's ambition rocks,  
Since all he got by fraud is lost in stocks....*

*O! wert thou not a Duke my good Lord Humphrey  
From bailiffe's claws thou scarce could keep thy bum  
free.*

Much of the Duke's money was spent to grand architectural effect, both on his mausoleum and on Canons, his palace nearby, where the staircase alone was made from 22-foot long slabs of marble. (After the house was demolished, this ended up in the Odeon Cinema in Broadstairs, where it was blitzed during the war!) His private chapel was one of singular magnificence, with a full choir in permanent attendance, who would sing to the dining company every evening.

It was in St. Lawrence's at Stanmore that the Duke would sit, flanked by men dressed as the Vatican Swiss Guard, listening to Handel, who was his Master of Music, composing the twelve Chandos anthems, as well as his first English oratorio, *Esther*, on the Grinling Gibbons carved organ.

Beneath the floor of the mausoleum, there is an especially sad crypt, with a quantity of children's coffins, all of softly sunken lead. The bodies of five of the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke's sons are also there, as well as that of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke's wife, Anne Wells – who had been bought for £20 from her first husband, a 'brutal ostler', who was offering her for sale in the streets of Newbury.

The classical mausoleum went on being built throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Indeed, one of the purest of all, looking especially like an ancient prototype, was designed in 1852 at Hamilton in Lanarkshire. It was built for 'El Magnifico', the 10<sup>th</sup>

Duke of Hamilton, described as 'the proudest man in Britain', who furthermore believed himself to be the rightful King of Scotland. Having inherited a gigantic fortune, he was to aggrandize his estates on an epic scale; in death, too, he was determined to reign resplendent, with a great domed drum of a mausoleum designed by David Bryce, with sculpture by Alexander Handyside Ritchie. (It is said that Ritchie was a 'hit and miss sculptor', and here he decidedly missed.)

The stones of the Hamilton Mausoleum were dovetailed together with the minimum of mortar but with such maximum success that, despite having a coal seam mined beneath, it swayed and it sank, but it never fell down. At the Duke's funeral in 1852, *The Times* wrote that the building "is believed to be the most costly and magnificent temple for the reception of the dead in the world – always excepting the pyramids".

Inside, a marble, granite, porphyry and jasper floor mirrors the architecture that soars overhead. Its centrepiece of a radiant star is lit directly from the cupola – 'the eye of God' – shining from above.

Although the Duke died before the building was finished, enough progress had been made for him to be lain in his megalomaniac monument as his funeral service reverberated around him. The acoustics were fine, but unfortunately a 25-second echo rendered the service incomprehensible. The Duke was laid to rest in a sarcophagus of 'utmost rarity', which he had originally bought on behalf of the British Museum. It had been thought to contain the body of the Queen of Amasis, but when the remains were instead discovered to be those of a mere court-jester called Irit-irw, the Duke refunded the money. On his last journey abroad, he procured Eastern spices for his own embalmment, and would often try the sarcophagus out 'for size' –

with singular lack of success, since he had failed to take account of the obligatory lining and, when he died, his feet had to be cut off to crush him into his treasure.

There are no longer any Hamiltons in the crypt. When the mining set the mausoleum trembling in the 1920s, all the bodies were hauled off on coal carts to the cemetery nearby.

Mausolea are often great mansions for the dead and at Arbroath in Angus, there is one without precedent and without equal. It was built by Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfields to house his parents-in-law, his wife and himself for all eternity. As a philanthropic gesture, it was also designed to give the town a mortuary chapel for their dead. The castle-revival style of Scotland, so often lumbering, has in this case been set aleaping with towers, domes and spires, all thrusting heavenwards. It was begun in 1875 and continuously carved for the next 25 years by stonemason James Peters of Arbroath, with local delights lauded in the red sandstone of Angus: rabbits peer from pillar capitals and cranes cross their bills in a most decorative way. There is a frog modelled on a corpse brought in by children who asked for it "to be built into the chapel". Pillars are carved as tree trunks in a variety of barks and there are quantities of bulrushes, flowers and foliage – all different – throughout the building. Every centimetre, even that which would never be seen, has been meticulously executed.

But unless you are rambling on the roof, you will miss the most moving of all. There, all but hidden from view and marching around a little tower, is a humble Highland funeral – every kilted and shawled figure bowed down with grief. Both Patrick Allan-Fraser and his wife, Elizabeth, were worthy patrons of local life, nurturing the best of the artists and craftsmen of Angus. One most

